

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

*Tuesday, March 3, 1992/Phalgun
13, 1913 (Saka)*

*The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

11.01 hrs

[Translation]

Illegal Felling of Trees

*81. SHRI LALIT ORAON: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the measures taken to stop illegal felling of trees and for protection of forests;

(b) the assistance provided to the State Government for this propose;

(c) whether thousands of trees are being felled by the plywood industries in Bihar and other States; and

(d) if so, the action proposed to be taken in this regard under the Forest Conservation Act and Rules for regeneration of degraded forest lands?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The Government of India have taken a number of initiatives and measures and provided guidelines to the State/U.T. Governments to stop illegal felling of trees and for protection of forests. A detailed statement in this regard is laid on the Table of the House.

(b) The Central Government under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme have so far provided an amount of Rs.9.03 crores to State/U.T. Govts. during the period 1986-87 to Feb., 1992 and an amount of Rs. 3.25 crores have been earmarked for the year 1992-93.

(c) and (d). The State Govt. of Bihar have informed that it is not a fact that thousands of trees are being felled from forests by Plywood industries. There is also no report of felling of trees on forest lands by Plywood Industries in other States.

STATEMENT

(a) The Government of India have taken a number of initiatives and provided guidelines to the State/U.T. Governments for protection of forests and for checking illegal felling of trees. Brief details of some of the important measures are—

(i) The National Forest Policy, 1988 predominantly aims at preservation, conservation, maintenance

and sustainable utilisation of the forest resource including enhancement of natural environment. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim.

- (ii) The enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and its amendment in 1988 has been a major landmark in conservation of forests. The State/UT Governments have to take prior permission of the Central Government for diversion of any forest land for non-forest use.
- (iii) The Central Government have been assisting the State Governments in their effort to protect forests and stop illegal felling by providing financial assistance under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Development of Infrastructure for Protection of Forests against Biotic Interference"
- (iv) The Government of India have encouraged development of substitutes for timber by non-woody products, such as PVC, Steel, Aluminium, Reinforced Cement Concrete and medium density fibre board out of agricultural wastes.
- (v) Guidelines have been issued to State/UT Govts from time to time for protection of forests. Some of these guidelines are as follows:

- (i) To avoid felling of natural forests and where such felling are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to an area not exceeding 10 ha. in the hills and 25 ha. in the plains.

- (ii) To consider banning felling of green trees in the hills above 1,000 metres, as least for some years.
- (iii) To identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.
- (iv) To set apart 4% of the geographical area as protected area like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserves etc.
- (v) To take measures for protection of forests from fires.

[Translation]

SHRI LALIT ORAON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a ban on felling of fruit trees as well as other trees under the Forest Conservation Act. I would like to know whether the Government is aware of the fact that the whole plywood industry is dependent for its needs on the felling of trees.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, the plywood industry is meeting its requirement either through import or through non-forest wood. No such report either from Bihar or from any other State has been received that the forest wood is being felled to meet the requirement of plywood industry.

SHRI LALIT ORAON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have asked how is the plywood industry meeting its requirement of raw wood in view of ban on felling of trees under Forest Conservation Act, whether these are in non-forest land or forest land.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, this question was about forest land. Now he is asking why the trees are being felled on

non-forest land. Government has no power regarding Non-forest land so it is true that trees are being felled on this land and the industry is also planting trees to meet its growing requirements.

[English]

SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO: Mr. Speaker Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply has given a large number of steps which have been taken by the Government with a substantial amount of money. But the general feeling, Sir, is that nothing is being done. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he has any documentary or physical evidence for the steps taken by him due to various legislations. Is there any tangible proof including that of the ecological battalion or the task force which are working in Rajasthan, in the Shivaliks and Shahjahanpur blocks in Dehra Dun?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: A large number of afforestation and tree plantation programmes are being implemented every year, but doubts do persist sometimes that this is not physically happening. In the light of this, to dispel such doubts and also to get it confirmed within the Ministry, I have myself requested all the State Governments to give figures on plantations done in the last eight months, district-wise, block-wise and panchayat-wise. And I thought that this information should be shared with hon. Members of the House, with MLAs and with the public at large. This information on plantations done in the last eight months has been received by me from 16 States. Some of the States have not sent this information. There are 11 States which have not so far sent the information. But they have promised that they shall be doing so very shortly.

When the information as prepared on the basis of a format prepared by us to dispel such doubts that plantation is merely done on the files and figures are planted the files have been received by me. I shall place it in the library of Parliament so that every Member will be able to know as to

what is actually happening with regard to the situation in his own district, block and Panchayat.

SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO: What about the ecological task force?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: The Ecological Taskforce has done very good work. The cost of the ecological taskforce is much higher than other programmes. We are looking into the aspect as to how this cost can be reduced. The scheme of ecological taskforce has been proposed for extension by one year.

(DR. SHRIMATI) K. S. SOUNDARAM: Respected Speaker Sir, our Tamil Nadu Government is taking steps to prevent illegal felling of trees, particularly the sandalwood trees by notorious smugglers like Veerappan and his gang. Our Tamil Nadu Government needs special assistance and help from the Central Government. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the details of assistance given in this regard and measures taken by the Centre to prevent illegal felling of trees in the forests of Tamil Nadu.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: I had myself visited Tamil Nadu and held discussions regarding various gangs involved in illegal felling of sandalwood trees. There is a scheme for the development of infrastructure for protection of forests and bio-interference. Under this scheme, we provide assistance to the State of Tamil Nadu. I do not have specific figures relating to Tamil Nadu. But in the year 1991-92, we have provided to all the State Governments an amount of Rs. 1,74,50,000. This covers the expenditure for jeeps, mobile vans, static wireless sets, guns and rifles. We are seized of the problem of organised gangs engaged in sandalwood smuggling. A strategy is being worked out in this regard.

Dr. (SHRIMATI) K.S. SOUNDARAM: For this purpose, the Government of Tamil Nadu needs helicopters.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reply given by the then Minister appears to be more theoretical than practical. The member has raised the question on the basis of his personal experience. Whenever we go to that area we also feel sorry to see the deteriorated condition there. It is high time to take strict steps for the prevention of deforestation on the large scale. What steps are proposed to be taken to enforce the present provisions, so that deforestation is stopped and to make that area green again. Do you propose to make a new-scheme or not? You can yourself visit the areas of Ranchi and Chhota-nagpur and see the deteriorated conditions of forests there.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: This is not a question. You are giving a lecture.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: There is nothing like lecture in it. Moreover the proceedings of the House, are also not being telecast today. It is a matter of great concern that the forest cover has reduced to one third there.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I will disallow this question, if you continue like this.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: I would like to know whether the measures are proposed to be taken soon in order to prevent further denudation of forests and to start afforestation programmes on large scale?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Hon. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there may be instances of felling of trees in some areas. I do not deny it. It is possible. If the hon. Member provides us some information regarding

this, I would get it investigated. We have directed the States to send details and figures pertaining to the last 9 months about the plantation done. But Bihar Government has not yet sent any figures. Recently, in a conference of the Forest Ministers I had urged them to send the figures. As soon as they are received from Bihar Government, I would make arrangements to keep them in library so that hon. Members can see the information. Regarding other afforestation programmes, if some special information is asked, it will be provided.

Ayurvedic Medicines and Doctors

*82. **DR. P.R. GANGWAR:** Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for development and quality control of Ayurvedic medicines and for better career prospects of Ayurvedic doctors; and

(b) the facilities being provided to the manufactures of Ayurvedic medicines and to the doctors in this regard?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI M.L. FOTEDAR): (a) and (b). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). Government of India have taken several legal and administrative action to develop and control the quality of ayurvedic medicines. Steps to improve career prospects of ayurvedic doctors have also been taken.

These are as follows:

1. Constitution of Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia Committee as early as 1962.